

THE CANADIAN MAGAZINE

VOL. XXXII

TORONTO, FEBRUARY, 1909

No. 4

TORONTO: A CITY OF HOMES

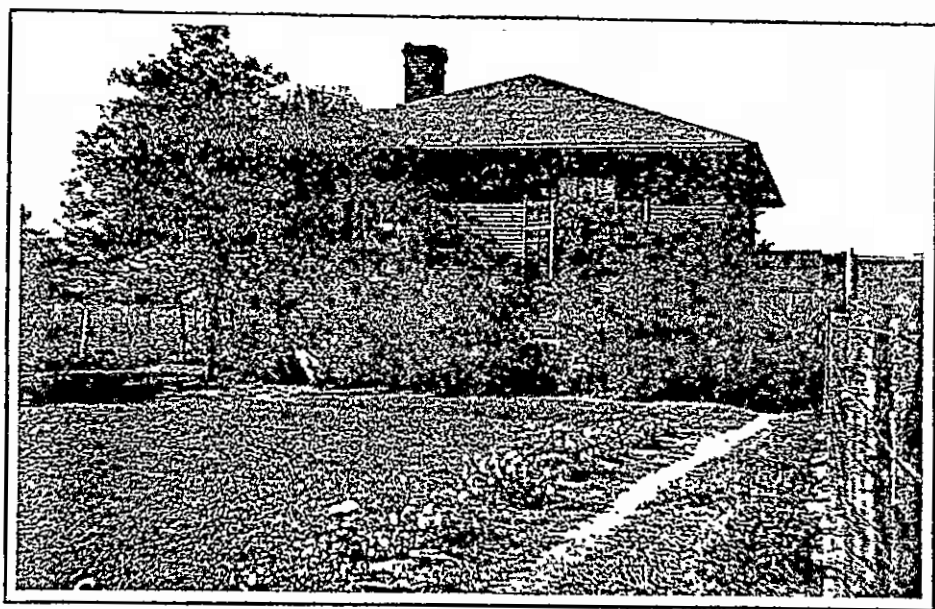
BY HORACE BOULTBEE

MOST people have noticed the increasing importance given in recent years to the beautifying of cities. Citizenship has come to carry with it a noticeable tendency towards that pride in beautiful surroundings which brought fame to the cities of Greece for all time. A trite phrase, "the city beautiful," is one result of this tendency. It is unthinkingly uttered by those who run while they read, but it indicates that there has come into existence a pride in the attractiveness of city streets and parks which had been either dead or dormant for many years. The movement which has given birth to this sentiment is yet young, although its results are already widespread. Many large cities in Canada and the United States are competing with one another to obtain positions of preëminence as centres of æsthetic charm. The movement is growing quickly in Canada, and an evidence of its advance was afforded recently by the appointment of a Toronto architect to the position of President of the Architectural League of America, an association of architects, one of whose chief aims is to spread a love for beautiful streets and parks.

Architects are interested in this movement more than other people, as a natural result of the ideals of their profession. Their influence and the

growth of the movement can be easily traced in Toronto and other cities. In Toronto they have taken definite action toward quickening the interest of the citizens in the attractiveness of their city. It is to be expected, therefore, that the citizens should show a lively appreciation of the efforts of those who wish to beautify the city and should have done their own share by building pleasant-looking homes. Those who are critically disposed will find individual matters for complaint, but those who have an eye for the general effect will find that Toronto has recently made important developments in the direction of becoming an attractive residential city. It is distinctly a city of homes and among the principal attractions for visiting sight-seers is a drive along the delightful winding streets of Rosedale, with its hundreds of beautiful residences.

Toronto's claim to be a city of homes is as well founded as that of any city in the world. It has only a brief civic history, but from its earliest settlement days it has been a centre of romantic attachment for those who have peopled it. Tribes of Indians gathered on the site of the future city, when they felt the congregating or the bartering instinct. The Frenchmen of those early days spent many a happy, though strenuous, day at Fort Rouillé. When Muddy York commenced to



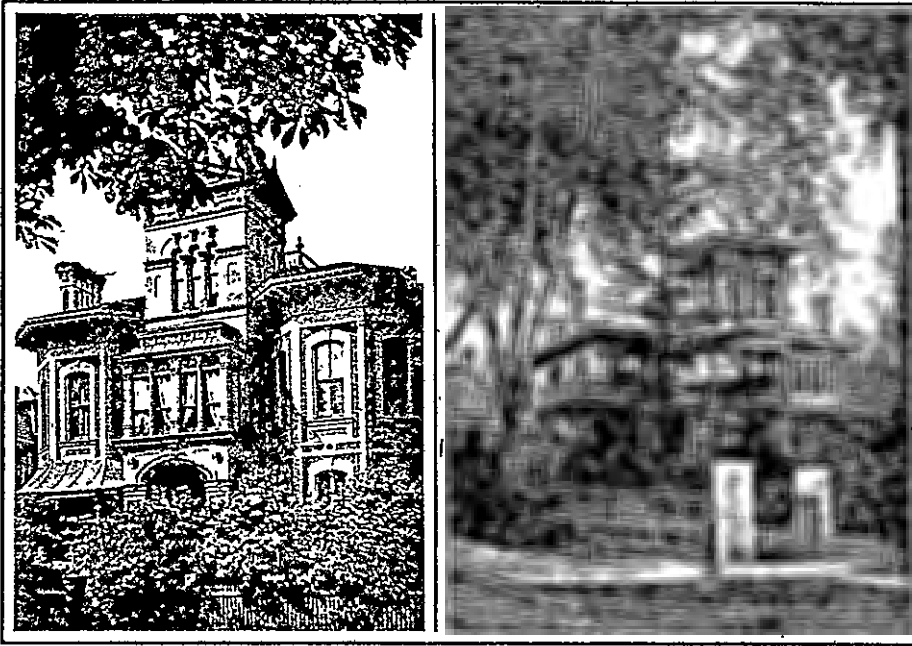
"WHERE FUTURE SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS MEN WERE BUNDLED OFF TO SCHOOL BY THEIR
HARD-WORKING MOTHERS, LONG YEARS AGO"

grow, after the British had come into possession, the settlement soon became well known for its homes. Those were homes of the good old-fashioned sort. Their owners, in many cases,

cherished memories of the Old Country, where they had lived in the delightful homes which abound everywhere. They had seen much of strife in other lands and hoped to find a



A TYPICAL TORONTO HOME OF THE LATER TYPE



"STATELY HOMES, WITH HIGH CENTRAL TOWERS, SUGGESTIVE OF ITALIAN VILLAS, ARE SCATTERED ABOUT THE CITY"

spot in the new world where they could settle quietly and live a life like that of their fathers in England. Though they came to this country with an expectation of adventure, they came also to escape the religious and political bickerings of the old world. For a long time they found more of adventure than of peace, and the new country had to be seized as well as defended before it could be cultivated. Little wonder that, when time permitted, they turned with pleasure to the task of home-building.

Along the shore of the bay the city commenced to grow. Only a few years passed before several residences made their appearance. Some survivors of these houses may be seen to-day, hidden among the business blocks in the southern parts of the city. They are disappearing rapidly and will soon exist only in the memories of those who were fortunate enough to know something of Toronto in its earlier days. One hears now, such good old tales of

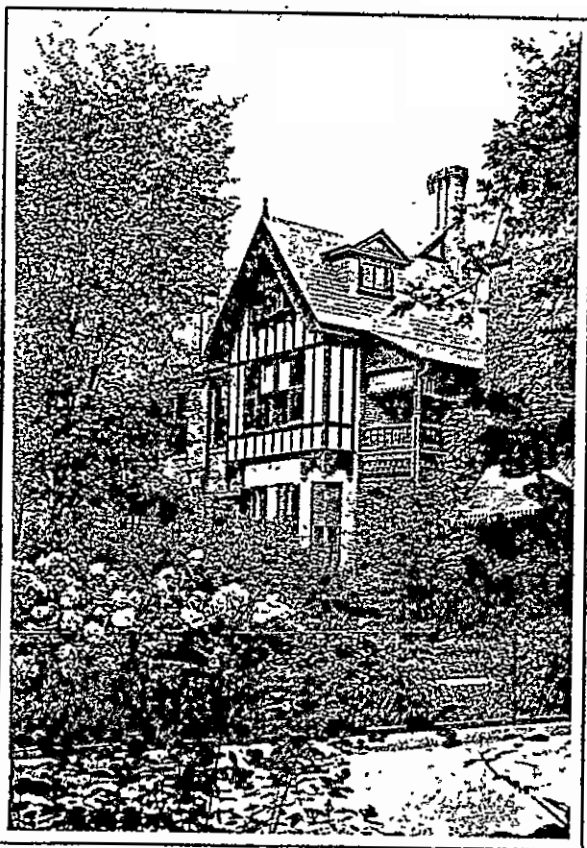
the hospitality and entertainment of those times that one wishes for a glimpse into the past. But those days have passed into history and have left behind them only their influence although something of the flavour of that early hospitality lingers in the homes of to-day. It is one of the richest legacies we have received from ancestors who were generous beyond measure in the heritage they bequeathed.

Since the building of Toronto's earliest homes, its architecture has developed along devious paths, but in its beginnings there were evidences of the higher ideals which were to prevail in later days. A few of the houses built in the early part of the nineteenth century still exist to show the taste of their builders. "The Grange," the well known Boulton homestead, now the home of Dr. Goldwin Smith, is an attractive example of the Georgian or Colonial style. It is set within a small park,

giving it the appearance of one of those country homes in the outskirts of English cities, where retired merchants or quiet old dowagers spend their declining years. The old Cawthra home, at the corner of King and Bay streets, now a banking house, is a delightful bit of classic architecture, which fortunately has been well preserved, so far as its exterior appearance is concerned. The Allan homestead, the Bishop's Palace, and others, which have disappeared were eloquent reminders of the early life of Toronto and of the home-loving instinct which led its people to build not only houses but 'homes,' in the best sense of the word. There were not many people in the early days who could afford to build beautiful homes. The useful old square building with simple appearance prevailed. Increase in the number of the well-to-do has only come in recent years, and with it has come an improvement in street railway service, which has made it possible for the city to spread, and has encouraged those who can afford it to build attractive houses in the outlying districts.

Before the recent extension of the city, the population had been congesting itself in the central sections. In the area south of Bloor Street, between Sherbourne Street and Spadina Avenue, hundreds of beautiful homes were built; but they were remarkable, more frequently for their internal rather than for their external attraction. Gray old square fronts severely plain, with little or no grounds, are scattered throughout this district. Families have grown up

and died in them and now the majority of these homes have become boarding-houses. They were the homes of Toronto during its second period of development, when it had attained some importance as a city, but had not yet become the metropolitan city of to-day. There is something pathetic about these old homesteads of a changing period. They sheltered happy families, which in many cases had much to do with the city's advancement, but their days were short. In their youth, they experienced little more than the promise of an important future, and the growth of the city was so rapid, that they were abandoned before they could gather about them any of the charms of tradition. The home life



"THERE ARE HOUSES WHICH TELL OF TIMES WHEN LAND WAS LESS VALUABLE THAN IT IS TO-DAY"



ROUGHCAST HOUSES, WITH BRICK FRONTS AND UNATTRACTIVE GABLES—A RESULT OF "BOOM" TIMES IN TORONTO

which they sheltered extended at most to two generations, before they were transformed into boarding-houses. Their glories were so short-lived that the generations of to-day will seldom learn of them.

Toronto is a different city now from the Toronto of a generation ago. The well-to-do have sold out their gray old homesteads and built elaborate houses in the outlying districts. This movement has had its greatest activity during the last five or six years. In every direction, but chiefly toward the north, and especially in Rosedale, residences of every description have been built. Rosedale has become the chief attraction of Toronto, from a residential point of view. Its crescent streets, pleasant, shaded walks and bright, clean houses with well kept gardens give it substantial claim to the title sometimes given to it of

"Spotless Town." One could write at some length about the attractions of Rosedale, the chief of which to-day is its newness. As one walks along the streets, one feels that all these bright new houses are still occupied by the people for whom they were built, and for whom the pleasures of living in a new home have not yet grown stale. But one should not take up the case of Rosedale alone. Perhaps it contains a larger share of the well-to-do than any other section of Toronto. But the well-to-do have no monopoly of home pleasures. Rosedale people probably enjoy a good share of them, but Toronto's homes are confined to no one locality.

Let one walk all about the city, if he be able, and he will be amazed at the number of front doors behind which he can feel with some certainty that there is a "home," like the home

he likes to recall or to picture as his own ideal. They exist in endless variety. Unpretentious cottages with clean front steps and snowy lace curtains grow up unexpectedly in places where they were not looked for before. There are many hundreds of these in Toronto, where future successful business men were bundled off to school by their hard-working mothers, long years ago. Semi-detached houses have their share of home memories clustering about their uninteresting interiors. Throughout the older settled parts of Toronto, there are houses which tell of days when land was less valuable than it is to-day. Stately homes with high central towers, suggestive of Italian villas, are dotted about the city. This type of house has the one almost invariable characteristic that it has an attractive bit of ground. Shrubbery and trees and weather-beaten statuary tell of the tastes of those who built them, fifty years or more ago, and sought to surround themselves with the influences of the culture which they appreciated most.

When considering the class of building which has recently become general in Toronto, one naturally recalls to mind the houses which were most in vogue some fifteen years or more ago, when building experienced so great a boom. People who lived in Toronto in those days can remember the long rows of brick fronts, with rough-cast backs, which seemed to spring up in a night. They presented an epitome of much bad taste, and of everything prosaic and disagreeable. At the same time they must have been responsible for a great deal of that lack of home instinct which is noticeable in the young people of the middle classes. It is really a wonder that their effect was not more disastrous than was the case. With their false fronts, which sometimes were only of brick veneer they were an ever-present example, of untruth and of that striving for effect beyond one's means which is destructive entirely

of home ideals. How much better pleased one feels to come across an unassuming rough-cast cottage, with its real character plainly showing on its face, and speaking pleasantly of moderate means and modest home comforts. One may still find many a row of cramped looking, ugly pretences of homes in Toronto, stretching down a long vista of symmetrical unsightliness, but the comfortable rough-cast cottages are sadly rare.

Toronto's history has all been very much of one kind. Beyond a little strife now and again, it has developed steadily as a commercial and an educational centre, and has enjoyed the advantages of a foundation laid by people of culture and perseverance. It has developed, much as one might have predicted, and to-day, is as attractive as a residential city, as a person of simple tastes can desire. Its attractions could be set forth readily in guide-book fashion. They are, good situation, beautiful surroundings, healthy climate, active and prosperous citizens, and a number of others. Whatever the causes and their individual influences, they have combined to produce a result which is a source of pride to the people who claim Toronto as home.

Broadly speaking, one may receive two characteristic impressions of Toronto, or of any other city for that matter, and the vividness of the impression will depend largely upon the person who receives it. One may go down town early in the morning and note the people hurrying along the streets to their places of business, and wonder whether the office is not really their home. Thoughts of home do not seem to occupy many of their minds. At evening, however, the story is different. Throngs of people press homeward eagerly. There are suppers and slippers ahead of many of them, and a quiet half-hour with the garden hose or the watering pot. Then again there is the restless crowd who must get away from themselves, and hurry to the theatre.

But the home-seekers prevail at evening, when the offices are closed. They sit up late, putting off the evil hour when sleep must come as a prelude to another day at the office. In Toronto one gets the impression that this evening, home-seeking class is unusually large and that there are many happy homes waiting for them.

A visitor to Toronto would not be likely to see just this aspect. Visitors cannot see more than the outside

unless they settle down for a long stay. It is noticeable, however, that many visitors, even the most transient, carry away an impression of Toronto as a residential city. The same thing is said of other cities, and possibly it is true, but Toronto's case is not affected by this. Strangers are favourably impressed by Toronto's handsome homes, and its fame has been spread abroad as much by this as by any other of its charms.

SECOND THOUGHTS

By GEORGE HERBERT CLARKE

Was it I who dreamed
In the doubtful Dark
That distant gleamed
A kindling spark?
Was it I who sought it
And found its flame
And seized and brought it.
The way you came?

Was it I who bowed
And held the fire?
Was it you whose proud
Regard drew nigher?
Was it your torch took
Sudden light from mine,
And your radiant look
That I drank like wine?

Or, did you pass
Serene and still—
No smile, alas,
On those lips so chill;
Your torch unlit
And the Dark about—
Sole light in it
Fast flickering out?

Nay, dying not,
Though its flame must be
By fated lot
Unpassed to thee;
Though the Dark be dark
One torch may prove
A meeting-mark
In the Endless, love!